

commitments required of the volunteer Design Review boards, comments at a public meeting for Design Review must be limited to Design Review issues. If there are other issues regarding a project, it is best to either send them in writing to the assigned DPD planner or ask for another public meeting.

Can I Make a Difference?

You bet you can. Neighbors who had witnessed past dumping on a vacant lot helped to identify and avoid a potential problem on a new housing proposal. Several developers have reported that comments really helped them to improve their projects, and were grateful for the input from neighbors through the Design Review process. Community comments on more than one project have prompted the proponent to return to the drawing board and propose modifications or a completely new plan that responded to concerns raised. The number of comments is not what matters. DPD is not empowered to take general votes or polls on development projects. What makes a difference are comments that are directly related to the specific project, that recognize how much of the problem is caused by that project, and that propose reasonable solutions for consideration.

What Are Appeals?

Most of the projects that require signs to be posted will also include an opportunity to appeal DPD's decision to the City's Hearing Examiner (a separate office from DPD) or, for shoreline projects, to the State Shorelines Hearings Board. An appeal is an opportunity to contest a decision by DPD without having to go to Court. Rules for each of these types of appeals are available from DPD, from the Hearing Examiner, and online (www.cityofseattle.net/examiner/).

Beyond Appeals

If a party to an appeal of a DPD decision disagrees with the outcome of the appeal, the appeal decision may be challenged in court.

DPD Contacts

To make comments:

Send a letter to DPD, Public Resource Center (PRC), 700 5th Ave., Suite 2000, P.O. Box 34019, Seattle, WA, 98124-4019, or email the PRC at prc@seattle.gov.

To receive public notice of MUP applications, decisions, and meetings:

Twice-weekly public notice is available in our Land Use Information Bulletin at www.seattle.gov/dpd/notices.

For answers to land use questions:

- If you have general (not site-specific) zoning questions, call DPD's Public Resource Center at (206) 684-8467.
- For site-specific Single Family zoning information, call DPD's Applicant Services Center at (206) 684-8850.
- Due to the complexity of Seattle's Land Use Code, all other types of zoning information must be obtained in person at our Applicant Services Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., www.seattle.gov/dpd/asc, (206) 684-8850, or via our online Land Use Q&A Service at www.seattle.gov/dpd/landuse.

For property information, maps, and historical records:

- Use our online Map Center at www.seattle.gov/dpd/mapcenter, or visit our PRC (see address above).

To apply for a permit:

- Certain permit applications (over-the-counter and side sewer repair) can be made online at www.seattle.gov/dpd/permits.
- Most applications must be made in person at our Applicant Services Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., www.seattle.gov/dpd/asc, (206) 684-8850.

To track a permit:

- Check the status of a permit at our online Permit Desk, www.seattle.gov/dpd/permitdesk.



**City of Seattle
Department of Planning
& Development**

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neighbors that NOTICE

DPD's Guide to
Neighborhood Notices and Commenting

What Do Seattle's Land Use Notice Signs Mean To Me?

When you see a DPD sign posted on a property, consider it an invitation to be involved in the development of the community! You are invited to comment on the development proposals described on our public notices.

- Large white signs are posted when a project is of a size that requires review of potential environmental impacts (known as SEPA review.)
- A yellow 18" by 24" sign is posted for certain other types of Land Use proposals, including early design review guidance meetings, variances, conditional uses, most shoreline projects, and short subdivision projects.
- In addition to signage, we mail notice to over 200 neighborhood organizations and individuals citywide, and in certain cases to nearby property owners and tenants. Information is also posted on our website. If you would like to be informed of any public meetings on a particular project and on DPD's decision regarding the permit, just ask.

The City of Seattle's Land Use Code has specific requirements for notifying the public of opportunities to comment. The type and extent of this notice is generally dependent on the type of project in question. Because you know your neighborhood best, we want to hear from you about what effects a project might have.



Who Can Comment?

Anyone! Residents, students, employees and business owners—anyone who feels they would be affected by the proposal.

Why Solicit Public Comments?

The City recognizes that people have unique knowledge about the character of the areas in which they live and work. You may not be an expert in planning, design or development, but the history or other perceptions you provide can help produce a safer, more livable and sustainable environment. The purpose in collecting comments is to help DPD identify potential problems and find workable solutions within the legal limits established by the code.



When Can Comments Be Made For A Specific Project?

The signs and other notices contain important dates spelling out the beginning and the end of an official comment period.

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This period, in most cases 14 days, is the minimum time DPD must allow for comment, and may generally be extended an additional 14 days if requested by anyone. For shoreline projects, the comment period is 30 days, with no official extensions. Typically DPD takes longer than these timeframes to make a final decision, and will consider any comment provided before a decision is made, regardless of whether it comes within the comment period or not. However, getting your comments in early is still the only way to ensure that we will see them and have time to carefully consider them before a decision is made.

What Kinds of Comments Can DPD Staff Take Into Consideration?

There are specific issues that DPD is required to take into account when making decisions, and others which cannot be considered. These are set out as policies and as criteria in the Land Use Code and have all been adopted by the City

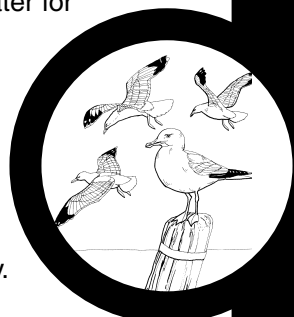
Council. Below are some examples of the types of concerns that can be considered for different types of projects. In some cases a project may include more than one of these components. To be effective, your comments should focus on the same concerns DPD must consider.

SEPA: There are policies for impacts on earth, such as erosion; on water and air, such as pollution; on traffic, such as congestion that may be caused or made worse by the proposal; on designated public Scenic Routes and Viewpoints, such as a building that might block views of the mountains, lakes, or skyline from public spaces; on plants and animals, such as a rare or endangered species or significant habitat area. The SEPA ordinance has 19 such policies in all. You can get a copy at DPD or online through the Clerk's office.



Shoreline: Shoreline areas around major water bodies (Greenlake and larger) have an overlay that requires additional scrutiny to protect water quality, habitat, water-dependent-uses, and views (not from private property); and to improve public access to the water for certain developments.

Variance: Variances are allowed when a property has some unusual condition that makes it significantly less useable than other property in the same land use zone and vicinity. There are five criteria that must be met. Comments on variances should focus on whether or not the site is unusual compared to other property, and would have substantial difficulty or hardship being developed in accord with the Code; whether the variance goes too far; and whether the variance would cause material (physical) harm to the public or adjacent properties, or adversely affect the character of the area.

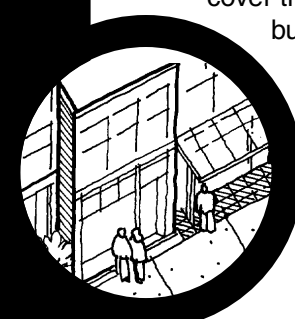


Administrative Conditional Uses: These are uses that the City Council has determined should be allowed in certain zones, but only if they meet specific criteria. These criteria usually deal with the physical or functional impacts of a particular use, such as noise, odors, litter, glare from lighting, parking, or traffic. In some cases, the criteria pertain to other policy con-



cerns, such as limiting residential uses in heavy commercial or industrial areas to prevent conflicts. In order to be effective, you should learn the specific criteria that apply to the proposal you are concerned about, and focus your comments on whether the project meets the criteria.

Design Review: DPD conducts Design Review by using a set of adopted guidelines, and prioritizing the guidelines for a particular project, based on public comments and direction from the local Design Review Board. The guidelines cover the physical appearance of the building and the site, and how it relates to its surroundings, including the overall size and shape of the building, landscaping, and materials. Your comments on design review should focus on these aspects of a project. Environmental concerns, such as traffic and parking impacts, are not addressed by design review.



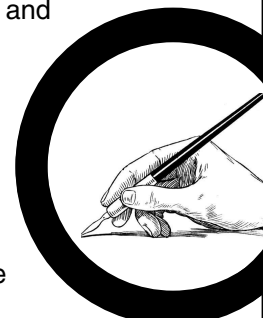
What Kinds of Comments are Considered?

DPD can only consider comments that are relevant to the applicable criteria and policies and related to the specific project. Comments regarding a project's impacts on property values, for example, are not considered in the review of a conditional use permit for an institution offering a food bank, because this is not one of the criteria that applies to the review of such a use.

DPD will not accept an application for a use that is clearly not permitted. Typically, when a use is permitted in the zone where it is proposed, DPD does not have the authority to deny that use. Most impacts can be mitigated to a level that is in accord with what was expected when the Council adopted the Land Use Code permitting the uses. The most common type of permit that is denied is a variance, which generally relates not to allowing the use, but to allowing the size or location of a particular development proposal to depart from the development standard of the Code, and for which strict criteria must be met.

How Can I Make Effective Comments?

- Although the quantity of letters may indicate to DPD the extent of neighborhood or agency interest, it is the relevance of the comments—the information they contain—that will most affect a project's outcome.
- Briefly explain who you are and why you are interested in the project.
- State your concerns clearly and succinctly using objective language.
- Comment only on issues relevant to the decision being made.
- State opinions and preferences, ask questions, and propose alternative solutions to particular issues. State informed opinions and, where possible, include data to support your opinion.
- Review the project's technical reports or EIS data, comment on conclusions, assumptions, and the data collecting methods.
- Keep focused on your objective. You want DPD to hear your concerns and be compelled enough to investigate further.
- Identify the topics you want to include in your letter and how you want to organize them.
- Ask for studies that you think are important but have not been provided.
- If the proposed project is subject to SEPA and you think it will have significant environmental impact, request that an EIS be prepared.
- Provide your own information.
- Identify project features that you like and think should not be changed.
- Provide any comments about the project's compliance with the Land Use Code.
- Ask to be added to the project mailing list and request a copy of the notice of decision. (Copies are sent via U.S. mail, so please provide your mailing address when making requests.)



What Prompts a Public Meeting?

Public meetings are required for most Design Review projects, for projects where an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared, and where DPD makes a recommendation to the Hearing Examiner or City Council. In addition, a public meeting may be held when DPD receives a written request signed by 50 or more individuals. When DPD holds a public meeting, notification is provided according to rules found in the Land Use Code. Because of the need to limit the time